

CAREER CORNER

Issue 25

Sharon Givler, Director
Gwen Miller, Assist. Director
Susan Donmoyer, Assistant

April 2012



Transitioning to the World of Work

“Am I qualified for that internship? Have I gotten involved on and off campus and incorporated those experiences into my resume? Have I investigated opportunities and applied to those that interest me? Have I made enough connections? Do I know where I’d like to look for full time work after graduation?”

These are just some of the questions you may be asking yourself throughout your college career. In fact, much of your four years are probably spent preparing for what comes next. The goal is to find an internship or experience that will help you to get a job after graduation, right?



Actually, that is only part of it. *Finding* opportunities is half the battle; *succeeding* in those opportunities is what shapes how you will move forward from there. Read on for tips on how to successfully transition from college to the workplace by living up to what you promised employers in an interview, making an effort to fit in once there, and understanding some of the challenges you may face.

Understand What Employers Want... ...and Deliver!

Career Services works with students to understand what employers are looking for in order to guide them through the job search process. This can shape resumes, cover letters, and interview responses to demonstrate one’s compatibility with a company or position. Specifically, we spend a lot of time coaching the S.T.A.R. method to encourage students to tell stories about their experiences as a way of demonstrating their skills and qualifications. *(For more on interviewing and the S.T.A.R. method, see the February 2012 Career Corner Newsletter).*

Results from a recent NACE poll indicate that employers find the skills listed below to be the most essential in new hires. You can certainly tailor your job search efforts thusly, potentially helping you to land the job. However, and perhaps more importantly, it is then your responsibility to continually show your new employers that you meant it when you laid claim to those skills. Failure to do so can result in a difficult transition.

For example, if you touted organizational skills or expressed a love of working in teams in your interview, employers will expect those strengths to shine once you begin working. They will quickly be able to determine if you were exaggerating, or simply ‘talking the talk,’ which will damage your budding reputation as a professional. For this reason (and many others), we can’t stress enough how important it is to be truthful in the job search process. Yes, you can make an effort to ‘get at’ what employers are looking for, but only if it remains true to who you are!

The most important thing you can do once employed is show that you can add value to your organization. Although there may be a period of time in which you will be ‘proving yourself’ more than contributing, remember what you were hired to do and work at mastering your responsibilities. Most importantly, keep in mind what employers want (specifically what *your* employer wants!), and DELIVER!

What Employers Want *Job Outlook 2012 (released October 26, 2011)*

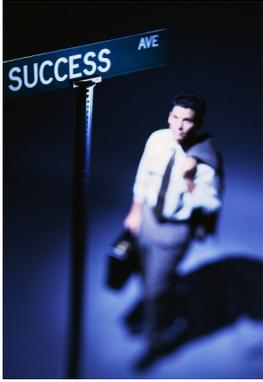
Skill/Quality	Rating*
Ability to work in a team structure	4.60
Ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization	4.59
Ability to make decisions and solve problems	4.49
Ability to obtain and process information	4.46
Ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work	4.45
Ability to analyze quantitative data	4.23
Technical knowledge related to the job	4.23
Proficiency with computer software programs	4.04
Ability to create and/or edit written reports	3.65
Ability to sell or influence others	3.51

1=Not important; 2=Not very important; 3=Somewhat important; 4=Very important; and 5=Extremely important

10 Simple Ways to Succeed

The following article is geared towards recent graduates embarking on their first year on the job. However, the information is well-suited for students entering into an internship or professional experience that is a stepping stone for your career.

In every new career, there are a few ways a person can position themselves for success. Here are 10 simple rules:



1. Ask Questions – asking a question is something that almost everyone has trouble doing as a new hire. We have the mindset that we are expected to know everything on the first day on the job. FALSE! Ask questions. If you don't know the answer, don't make one up. Instead, say "I don't know, but I can get that answer for you".

2. Find a Mentor – finding a mentor(s) will help you understand the business better, learning from another person's perspective and experience. Ask them questions about how they got to where they are today, what their stumbling blocks were, and how they overcame those challenges. (For more on mentorship, check out: [The Importance of Finding a Mentor](#))

3. Set Goals – setting goals, both professionally and personally are key to one's success. After all, if you don't know where you're going, how will you know when you get there? I would suggest setting 12 month, 2 year and 3-5 year goals that are challenging, but realistic. Adjusting your goals throughout your career is common.

4. Know Your Job – knowing your job before stepping outside of your comfort zone will help build your credibility. Before you jump into a new venture or take a risk, make sure you know your job (not just know, but do) better than anyone else.

5. Be Respectful – be respectful of others' ideas. If someone has a better idea than you, acknowledge that. A little humility and transparency goes a long way. Don't be afraid to stand up for your ideas, but if someone has a better one, let them know you know it is.

6. Pay It Forward – it sounds cliché, but pay it forward. Don't just ask people to help you, ask how you can help them. Smile at someone or do something nice for a complete stranger. You'll feel great and people will remember you!

7. Thirst for Knowledge – never stop learning. Be a lifelong student. There are lots of articles, blogs, websites, books, seminars, classes and leadership forums that will help you learn more about things that interest you. Many employers offer leadership development classes for employees so that they can continue to polish their management style.

8. Be Authentic – be authentic to everyone, all the time. Maintain your personal brand and don't try to be someone you aren't for the sake of keeping up appearances. If respect and honesty are part of your management, you should go far.

9. Build Your Network – never stop networking. Some people think that networking ends once you land the job. It can, but how will that help you the next time? Build your network, maintaining contact with your peers, coworkers, and mentors. Keep up with your contacts, letting them know what you're doing and how you're progressing.

10. Add Value – add value every day. Come to work with a great attitude, enjoy what you do, and do it to the best of your ability every single day. Ask your coworkers and managers how you can help them. Give constructive feedback and help your team with changes for the better.

Source: Kirk Baumann's blog: <http://campus-to-career.com/2010/04/06/10-simple-ways-to-succeed-in-your-new-career/>

Common Challenges to a Successful Transition

Attitudes and Expectations

When beginning in a work place, first adjust your expectations. You are new, you are young, you are inexperienced; don't be impatient or hurt if you aren't asked your opinion or no one seems interested in your ideas right away. Slow down and positively embrace the "paying your dues" time. Show that you are open to feedback and don't cut corners in learning the foundations and culture of your new work setting. It's more important to develop work savvy, an understanding of office politics, and a mastery of your job tasks (no matter what they are) before you start asking for challenges or looking for change.

Technology Blunders

No question - this is a technologically savvy generation. But, in addition to being a tool for efficiency, it can be a detriment if not used professionally. A few quick tips:

- Know when face-to-face is more appropriate than email communication
- EVERY email should be treated as professionally as a business letter
- Be careful with internet surfing or social media usage
- Phones/devices should be off during meetings or left in your office

This section could go on and on...

Check out a past blog entry by a 2009 graduate: [Managing E-Mail on the Job](#)

Generational Differences

In any given work setting, you could have 3 or 4 generations working. This can be a challenge if you aren't aware of communication styles or work habits of each. You can learn a lot from individuals who've worked a long time; keep an open mind, find a mentor, and observe different perspectives and personalities. Keep in mind that just because you're the newest generation working, doesn't mean you're the best. Just as you may have pre-conceived notions of older generations, those same people have perceptions of you. Be sensitive to this so you can more effectively collaborate in a multi-generational workforce.